

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8353

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 2917

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR GR TU

SUBJ: GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS: CARAMANLIS RESPONDS TO

DEMIREL'S CRITICISMS (SECOND MESSAGE TODAY)

REF ATHENS 2893

1. I HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM A LUNCHEON IN HONOR OF VISITING EXIMBANK CHAIRMAN CASEY, AT WHICH I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN SOME FURTHER INSIGHT INTO THE UNFORTUNATE PUBLIC EXCHANGE OF CRITICAL REMARKS BETWEEN THE GREEK AND TURKISH PRIME MINISTERS LAST NIGHT. MINISTER OF ECONOMIC COORDINATION PAPALIGOURAS, WHO WILL BECOME ACTING PRIME MINISTER TOMORROW WHEN CARAMANLIS LEAVES ATHENS FOR PARIS, SAID THAT CARAMANLIS WAS "VERY ANGRY" LAST NIGHT WHEN HE LEARNED OF DEMIREL'S CRITICAL STATEMENTS EARLIER IN THE DAY. CARAMANLIS IMMEDIATELY WANTED TO ISSUE A PUBLIC REPLY. HOWEVER, HE WAS PERSUADED TO CONSULT WITH PAPALIGOURAS, DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF AND FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS, ALL OF WHOM ADVISED CARAMANLIS LAST NIGHT NOT TO ISSUE ANY FURTHER STATEMENT.

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2. ACCORDING TO PAPALIGOURAS, CARAMANLIS CALMED DOWN BUT

NEVERTHELESS FELT THAT HE SHOULD GO AHEAD WITH SOME FURTHER PUBLIC STATEMENT LAST NIGHT. HE REASONED THAT IF HE DID NOT, THE GREEK PRESS THIS MORNING WOULD GIVE MASSIVE ATTENTION TO DEMIREL'S CHARGES AND CRITICISM, PORTRAYING THIS AS NEW TURKISH PROVOCATIONS AGAINST GREECE AND GREATLY INTENSIFYING THE WELL KNOWN GREEK TRAITS OF OUTRAGE AND INDIGNATION AGAINST TURKEY. CARAMANLIS FELT THIS WOULD ADD TO THE WAR JITTERS IN THE COUNTRY AND PERHAPS LEAD TO A FURTHER DRAW DOWN OF BANK DEPOSITS AND HAVE OTHER UNFAVORABLE EFFECTS ON ECONOMIC ACTIVITY. CARAMANLIS FELT THAT IF HE ISSUED A REASONABLY TEMPERATE RESPONSE, COUPLING IT WITH SOME FURTHER CONCILIATORY LANGUAGE TOWARD TURKEY, THIS MORNING'S GREEK PRESS WOULD GIVE BY FAR THE GREATER ATTENTION TO THE CARAMANLIS STATEMENT AND THERE WOULD BE A LESS EXCITABLE REACTION IN GREECE TO WHAT DEMIREL HAD SAID YESTERDAY.

3. EVEN SO, PAPALIGOURAS SAID THAT THESE MINISTERS ADVISED HIM TO REMAIN SILENT. HOWEVER, CARAMANLIS DECIDED NOT TO TAKE THEIR ADVICE AND LATE IN THE EVENING ISSUED THE STATEMENT REPORTED REFTEL. PAPALIGOURAS TOLD ME AT LUNCHEON THAT HE HAD SEEN CARAMANLIS LATE THIS MORNING AND THAT CARAMANLIS FELT HE HAD DONE THE RIGHT THING LAST NIGHT AND THAT THE GREEK PRESS THIS MORNING HAD IN EFFECT CARRIED THE STORY ABOUT AS HE HAD HOPED, WHICH CARAMANLIS THOUGHT TO BE ABOUT THE BEST THAT COULD BE MADE OF A BAD SITUATION.

4. COMMENT: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHAT APALIGOURAS TOLD ME IS, I THINK, THAT CARAMANLIS' INTENTION IN ISSUING HIS STATEMENT LAST NIGHT WAS TO TRY AND HAVE A CALMING EFFECT ON GREEK PUBLIC OPINION. KUBISCH

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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